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ELEVEN BLIND LEADERS

OR

"PRACTICAL SOCIALISM" AND

"REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS"

By B. H. WILLIAMS



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FROM AN I. W. W. STANDPOINT

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"INTELLECTUALS" AND WORKERS IN THE PARIS COMMUNE.

(From Lissagaray's "History of the Commune of 1871.")

Five deputies only signed the address for the election [for the Communal Council]. The rest of Louis Blanc's group had kept aloof from Paris for several days. These weaklings, having all their life sung the glories of the Revolution, when it rose up before them ran away appalled, like the Arab fisher at the apparition of the genie.

With these mandarins of the tribune of history and of journalism, mute and lifeless, contrast strangely the sons of the multitude—obscure, but rich in will, faith and eloquence. They could indeed "come down the steps of the Hotel-de-Ville head erect," these obscure men who had safely anchored the revolution of the 18th March. Named only to organize the National Guard; thrown at the head of a revolution without precedent and without guides, they had been able to resist the impatient, quell the riot, re-establish the public services, victual Paris, baffle intrigues, take advantage of all the blunders of Versailles and of the mayors, and, harassed on all sides, every moment in danger of civil war, known how to negotiate, to act at the right time and in the right place. They had embodied the tendency of the movement, limited their program to communal revindications, and conducted the entire population to the ballot box. They had inaugurated a precise, vigorous, and fraternal language unknown to all bourgeois powers. And yet they were obscure men, all with an imperfect education, some of them fanatics.

But the people thought with them. Where illustrious bourgeoisie had only accumulated folly upon defeat, these new comers found victory, because they listened to Paris.

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INTRODUCTION

The Labor Movement in America has undergone a severe shaking up since the advent of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905. Old ideas and methods of warfare have been put to the test of severe criticism at the hands of workingmen themselves, and the lines of the Class Struggle are appearing in broader and clearer perspective. Emphasis is being placed upon the constructive phases of Labor's problem as exemplified in Industrial Organization, rather than upon the hair-splitting distinctions and well argued though often ridiculous formulas of sectarian dogmatists. Cowardly and hypocritical "bourgeois idealism" wherein "the phrase surpasses the substance" is giving way to the **practical idealism** of the man in overalls, whose every-day environment enables him to suffer hardship and even, if necessary, to cheerfully go to jail, for a principle; but who, at the same time, never loses sight of the fact that the Labor Question is primarily an everyday problem of bread and butter, and that only by treating it as such, will its ultimate solution be at all possible.

Simultaneously with this coming to the front of the Industrial Union and its tactics, we see the old-time political socialist movement losing its tone. Under the tutelage of middle class and professional "intellectuals," for the most part without first-hand knowledge of the class struggle, the political movement is becoming more and more "opportunistic"; pinning its faith more and more to reforms, such as "labor legislation," "government ownership," "co-operatives," "taxation reforms," and other ineffectual schemes of "attacking capitalist society behind its back." At the same time it is hugging more closely to its breast the reactionary American Federation of Labor; adapting itself more closely to the tenets of craft unionism, and altogether losing its claim to the title, "**Revolutionary.**" Accompanying this

INTRODUCTION

process of emasculation is the inevitable revolt of proletarian elements inside this so-called political movement. Such revolts, however, are doomed to failure, so long as the actual basis for a revolutionary political movement is wanting, namely: class organization on the industrial field. The duty of the hour, then, for all revolutionists, is the upbuilding of the economic organization.

While it may be contended that the particular "reforms" or "steps toward socialism," dealt with in the following pages, are little likely at any time to absorb the whole attention of the working class, there is one phase of the subject which, like "Banquo's ghost," will not down. That is the question of **leadership**. The Industrial Union, however, points the way to its solution, also. Instead of the craft union "labor leader" with his autocratic powers and his constituency of indifferent or blind followers, or the "platform intellectual" with his crowd of "half baked" hero worshipers, the Industrial Union requires in its leading men **administrative abilities** only. That is to say, it demands at the head of the economic organization, men who have been and are living the life of the working class; who "embody the tendency of the movement"; who respect the constitution and are amenable to the discipline of the organization, and who possess the ability to administer its affairs in accordance with its purposes. This conception of leadership, in conjunction with the structural form of the economic organization itself, foreshadows the industrial democracy of future society—a society in which the individual will find his "freedom in labor" by serving to the extent of his capacity the interests of the collectivity.

To stimulate inquiry along these lines, rather than to attempt to "settle" the questions at issue, this work is released for publication at this time.

B. H. W.

New Castle, Pa., January 23, 1910.

ELEVEN BLIND LEADERS

(Address delivered before the Chicago Propaganda League
of the Industrial Workers of the World,
May 30, 1909.)

FELLOW WORKERS:

The subject I have volunteered to discuss with you tonight has recently formed the material of two lectures in this hall by prominent members of the Socialist Party. Mr. A. M. Simons' speech on "Revolutionary Tactics" was followed with one by Professor John C. Kennedy of Chicago University on the question of the value of political action to the labor movement. The two lectures were in a way supplementary to each other, and together contained about all that can be said in a general way in favor of "practical socialism" from a purely political standpoint.

The substance of both Simons' and Kennedy's answer to their I. W. W. critics is contained in the statement that "any organization or any line of action is good so long as it leads in the direction of the overthrow of capitalism." That axiomatic conclusion was hurled at the I. W. W. with all the assurance of a teacher who presumes upon the innocence of his pupils regarding such an obvious fact.

But then the speakers proceeded to name some of the "good" means to the end of a social transformation as they conceived it.

One means was the union. And Mr. Simons contended in his opening speech that the American Federation of Labor was turning in the direction of socialism. When confronted by one of his critics with the statement from the Wall Street Journal that the "A. F. of L.

constitutes the strongest bulwark against socialism in America," he replied with the admission that the A. F. of L. was not what he would like to see; and that if it modified its form and changed its tactics, that would be the first time in history that such an organization did so.

Both Simons and Kennedy mentioned as another essential means to the end the system of "co-operatives" as exemplified in England, Belgium and other European countries. Simons was doubtful about their practicability in America, but Kennedy was more hopeful.

Then "public parks," "state insurance against unemployment," "old age pensions" and the "feeding of school children" were mentioned as steps in the right direction, not to be despised by the working class.

Labor legislation, such as eight hour laws, employers' liability, and others, came in for their share of eulogy. Kennedy illustrated such "steps toward socialism" from alleged facts of English and German history, avoiding references to America's experience in such matters.

The substance of both speakers' argument was that the union is a good thing and the industrial form is better than the craft form; the ballot is an essential; municipal ownership is on the program; labor legislation is a step in the right direction; and "co-operatives" may help to train the working class to run the industries after the workers have captured the political machinery of the capitalist state.

The only point of departure between the two speakers was that while Simons was convinced that a "revolutionary crisis" is inevitable in the overthrow of capitalism, Kennedy was of the opinion that in America, at least, the transition from capitalism to socialism will be brought about by the easy stages above outlined and with comparative peace.

As these two speeches by Editor Simons and Professor Kennedy are so closely related in substance to a symposium on "practical socialism" recently appearing

in the Saturday Evening Post (issue of May 8, 1909), containing replies to a question by the editor from ten prominent members of the Socialist Party, I shall consider the two speeches and the ten replies together.

SYMPOSIUM ON "PRACTICAL SOCIALISM."

The editor of the Evening Post asked the question: "How will the Co-operative Commonwealth be brought about?" and supplemented that by another question: "Suppose that you should elect a socialist President and Congress, how would you go about transferring private property to public ownership?" In the issue containing the ten replies, the editor says: "We leave it to our readers to judge whether the preachers of this new gospel have a cure for social ills which they or any one else can apply practically."

First of the ten comes Eugene V. Debs, who, after making the statement that "no one on earth knows how socialism is to be introduced . . . nor, in fact, anything about it except that it is bound to come," proceeds to answer the above hypothetical question with the statement that if socialists gain the political power and are allowed to proceed peaceably they will doubtless begin by taking over as rapidly as possible the "essential means of social production and distribution, beginning with those most highly centralized and monopolized and most perfectly organized." He also assumes that "the new administration will be able to assure employment to all," and that a new national constitution will no doubt have to be adopted, which will abolish the Senate, take away the veto powers of the Supreme Court, and make Congress directly responsive to the demands and needs of the people.

Victor L. Berger expresses the hope that "both sides will take a lesson from history," and that the workers, instead of provoking a war and seizing the industries by force, will buy them outright from the capitalists.

Gaylord Wilshire says we're "not going to elect a

President, or Congress, or anything." That "we're all going to be socialists in the end," and that the dominant political party, when the time comes, will be forced to carry out the socialist program "unawares."

Upton Sinclair says practically the same thing, only he gives more detailed information. A great panic is going to take place, and "then with hunger parades in our streets, and Maxim guns also; with strikes in every industry, and a socialist meeting on every corner—the great change will be made by whatever party happens to be in power at the time." All this, and more, including the "abolition of dividends" and the taxing of the "rental values of land and buildings" is going to happen in 1913, according to Sinclair.

"Barney" Berlyn is "practical" in that he does not commit himself to any detail of his proposed change. He simply says that "the election of a socialist administration would be the Social Revolution itself," and that "the complete transformation might take a generation."

John C. Chase, who has had some experience as a socialist mayor, says that with the acquisition of political power by the workers the trick may be done in either of two ways: By purchase or by force. In the former event, the government can "get the purchase price from the revenues of the institutions themselves."

Wm. Mailly favors "absolute appropriation." He doesn't think that "society owes anything to the present possessors of industry." But the process of appropriation will be gradual after the workers have conquered political power.

Robert Hunter doesn't think the transfer need cause any disturbance at all; that "in making such a transfer there is no need whatever for a single wheel to stop or for a single day of interrupted labor." "The necessities of life, such as bread, milk, meat, coal and clothing would be taken as much as possible, and as quickly as possible, out of the field of capitalistic exploitation." The process will be gradual, according to Hunter.

A. M. Simons starts out by saying that he has "been asked that question about seven million times." He then proceeds to answer it by saying that "municipal undertakings in co-operation would have progressed just as they have in Europe." Then the ownership would be extended to the most concentrated capital. Employment for the unemployed would force up wages and practically make private business unprofitable. The wage system, Simons thinks, would probably continue long after the arrival of a socialist regime, due to replacing an old system by one radically different.

Finally, National Secretary J. M. Barnes declares that he would "use the power of taxation—to the limit of confiscation, if you please—to change the ownership of wealth from private to public." Barnes quotes Benjamin Franklin in justification of such policy on the part of a socialist administration, and furthermore contends that his proposition is quite in accord with existing law and the present constitution.

There you have the symposium on "practical socialism," supplementing the two speeches of Simons and Kennedy before the Chicago Propaganda League of the Industrial Workers of the World.

"INTELLECTUAL" SPOKESMEN FOR THE WORKERS:

It is not my purpose, in replying to these vagaries of "political opportunism," to spend much time with what might be construed as mere personal attacks upon the group of "leading socialists" who have thus taken part in this symposium in the name of socialism. Still I am reminded of the substance of what Wendell Phillips said in an anti-slavery speech. When accused of being too harsh in his attacks upon public men who upheld slavery, the great orator replied that the rank and file were more often influenced through their feelings and sentiments than by sober reasoning and facts, and that in order to force the mass of men to take notice of events, it was often necessary first to shake their faith in their

misleaders—to drive the harpoon of truth through the rhinoceros hide of a Webster or a Benton. That psychological principle thus enunciated by Wendell Phillips finds its justification in the material fact that men are products of their environments, and that changes in the mode of living of individuals are usually accompanied by changes in their hopes, aspirations and ideas. Guided by this principle, we are called upon, then, not merely to condemn the individuals, but to explain the ideas, of the above-mentioned “leading socialists.”

Not one of the eleven men who thus presume to speak in the name of the working class is or has been in recent years an active participant in the daily struggle of the workers in industry. Some of them never had that experience in wage slavery. Two are “millionaire socialists”; one is a teacher in Rockefeller’s University; four others are editors (two of the four have been for many years); one is an employer of labor in a small factory; one is a professional novelist and writer; and two are paid attaches of the Socialist Party*.

The editor of the Saturday Evening Post says they represent all elements. In justice to fact, he should have added: “All elements except the proletarian—the wage slave proper.” And that reminds me of a story, a well authenticated tale of socialist agitation in the West. The incident happened about ten years ago. The scene was a Colorado mining camp; the occasion a socialist mass meeting of “rough necks” and “horny hands”; the speaker a well known “intellectual” and erstwhile “sky pilot” with a white waistcoat and a melodramatic manner. As the hour for opening the meeting arrived, the expectant audience of miners who had assembled from all parts of the surrounding country, watched the curtain rise, and saw that the stage was perfectly dark. Presently a dusky form was seen moving

* Since 1909 there has been some shifting of occupations of the eleven, but not toward wage slavery.

slowly toward the front of the platform, and a deep vibratory voice pronounced these words:

"I come, to speak for a class that CAN not speak for itself! (one light turned on.)

"I come, to speak for a class that WILL not speak for itself! (more lights.)

"I come, to speak for a class that DARE not speak for itself!

"I DARE (all lights flashed on) to speak for the working class!"

The "sky pilot" in this story typifies the eleven "leading socialists" who have thus presumed to deal with the question of "socialism and its revolutionary outcome." I shall endeavor to show you that no one of the eleven possesses the genius to grasp the proletarian standpoint of the question, and that their "practical socialism" amounts to a travesty even upon capitalist politics and is, therefore, the wildest of utopian dreams.

NO MENTION OF AN ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION.

None of the ten replies to the Saturday Evening Post's question contains mention of an economic organization of the working class in relation to the proposed transformation from capitalism to the Co-operative Commonwealth. Simons, in his speech before the Propaganda League, May 9, ridiculed the idea of the Union's "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old," as the I. W. W. Preamble puts it (1).

(1) A more recent statement of Mr. Simons' emphasizes this position. In a letter to William English Walling, published in the International Socialist Review for January 1910. Simons writes: "Personally, I have great sympathy with industrial unionism, but not as a panacea. I think its most deadly enemy is the man who talks about it as a means of getting the co-operative commonwealth. We are not organizing unions in the future or in the past but NOW, and for the purpose of fighting the class struggle." It will be remembered that Mr. Simons was one of the signers of the original Industrial Union Manifesto, and even boasted in his speech before the League of having written the greater part of the Manifesto. It is credibly reported that a great novelist, Sir Walter Scott, employed an amanuensis!

All of these "leading socialists" apparently conceive the transformation as the exclusive task of a political party, in control of the governmental machinery of the capitalist state, using that machinery to legislate or otherwise bring into existence the Co-operative Commonwealth.

I shall leave this phase of the problem to the conclusion, and proceed first to deal with the proposed "reforms" or "steps toward socialism" advocated by Simons and Kennedy in their speeches before the League.

First let us consider that "step towards socialism" known as

"CO-OPERATIVES."

The system of so-called "co-operatives" finds its highest development in the little country of Belgium. These consist for the most part of various agencies of production and distribution set up in competition with other capitalist institutions of similar character, and floated by money contributed from the savings of workers and middle class "socialists." The "co-operatives" were initiated by the Belgium Labor Party and are affiliated with that socialist political organization. A percentage of the profits realized by these establishments is regularly turned over to the Party for propaganda purposes. According to the Report of the Belgium Labor Party for the year ending December 31, 1906, the "co-operatives" numbered at that time 117 establishments in 24 different sections of the country, with a capital invested of several million dollars.

It must be borne in mind that Belgium is a very small country, no bigger than the single state of Maryland, with no such field for large industrial development as in this country or the larger countries of Europe. Even there, however, we find that the dominant industries, such as mining, transportation, and large manufacturing, are in control of the capitalist class, which thus maintains its industrial and political supremacy over the Belgian working class. Add to this fact the com-

paratively weak syndical or union movement, and we find that conditions for the workers in that country are essentially the same as in other capitalist countries. Furthermore, the "co-operatives" retain all typical features of like capitalist institutions of exploitation. "Profits" on one side implies "wages" on the other. That foreshadows trouble between worker and employer: As was pointed out by one of the critics of Professor Kennedy—a Belgian recently from that country—it is a frequent occurrence for workers employed in the Belgian co-operatives to go on strike for better conditions.

Just how far these institutions will be able to proceed in the competitive struggle with the capitalist class dominant in the field of "business," is a matter for the future to determine. But we may safely predict that their continued survival for any length of time will depend upon their comparative insignificance together with the necessarily restricted development of Belgian industry.

The main point urged in their favor is that "co-operatives" are training the workers for collective operation of industries in the Co-operative Commonwealth. As a matter of fact, the evidence shows that they are only training functionaries, with middle class instincts, in the arts of "profit making" and exploitation. Critics of the "co-operative" idea have frequently pointed out that this system has emasculated the revolutionary socialist movement of Belgium and made that country the classic land of "political opportunism." That contention is emphasized by the fact that unionism plays a subordinate role in the socialist movement in Belgium. Out of 145,781 affiliated members of the socialist party at the close of 1906, only 35,624 were members of unions which form practically all the syndicalists of that country. Further facts, tending to show the emasculation of the Belgian socialist movement will appear later when I deal with the question of labor legislation.

Outside of Belgium, in the larger European countries, "co-operatives" play a very insignificant role as an

economic factor. In the United States they are for all practical purposes an unknown quantity. The reason for this will be obvious to any student of American industrial conditions.

Imagine, if you can, a "co-operative" steel mill, or any number of such mills floated with the pennies of the workers, trying to compete with the billion dollar steel trust which, in addition to possessing the most highly perfected machinery for manufacturing steel products, also controls the sources of raw materials and the transportation facilities related to that industry! Or, imagine a "co-operative" railroad set up in competition with the great transportation systems covering the whole country like a spider's web, and owned and controlled by a half dozen magnates who are likewise the heads of other great trusts! Or, think of a system of "co-operatives" designed to manufacture and distribute food products in competition with the beef trust!

Such propositions are obviously ridiculous, and suggest that "co-operatives" in America must necessarily be limited to the proportions of the peanut stand or the push cart. But even that suggestion calls for some allowance, seeing that the push cart has also been trustified—that even the fruit peddlers of the great cities are under control of the big commission merchants.

So we may safely predict that "co-operatives" are not destined to play any part in this country toward bolstering up the decadent middle class, and training "middle class socialists" to the qualifications of "good business men."

I will dismiss that phase of the subject touched upon by Kennedy and Simons, and pass on to the more significant question of

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

A recent publication of the Bureau of Labor at Washington contains some information regarding the system of municipal ownership prevailing in Glasgow,

Scotland, that is worthy of notice in this connection. Among other things we are informed that the net profits accruing from the operation of the city-owned street railways amount to fifty per cent annually of the net receipts. The revenue thus realized results in a substantial reduction of taxes of property owners in that city. The same document shows that the work day for municipal railway employes has been reduced from twelve to ten hours, and that wages of conductors range from \$7.00 to \$9.00 per week (2).

It is difficult for one versed in the ways of capitalism to see any vital distinction here between the relationship sustained by the workers and their city employers of Glasgow, and that of the workers and their private employer of the municipal railway company of Chicago. The only possible distinction is, that while the Chicago street railway workers are organized and in position to strike against their employers, those of the city-owned railways of Glasgow have no union in the same sense.

But even that distinction as a general proposition fades away when we turn to France and view the recent movements of government employes in that country. Fifteen thousand postal, telegraph and telephone workers in Paris last March went on strike against their

(2) "Municipal Ownership in Great Britain, by Frederic C. Howe, Ph. D., Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor, No. 62, January 1906." The following quotation will help to emphasize the contentions made above:

"During eleven years of the municipal operation of the tramways there has been no friction between the department and its employes, who now number 4,352. On the taking over of the system by the city in 1894 the hours of daily labor of traffic employes were reduced from twelve to ten, while a still further reduction to 54 hours per week of six days was made later. In this, as in the other departments, the policy is to pay a fair rate of wages and to grant considerate treatment to the employes. By such means the employes are attached to the service and efficient men are secured for the department. All attempts to unionize the car employes have been unsuccessful."

government employer, which had been maintaining toward them exactly the same relationship as any private oppressor and exploiter. Since that event, the movement among government workers in France has become more general, embracing in its scope such categories of employes as teachers, prison wardens, employes in the mints, and even those working in the supply and commissary departments of the army. Some of these, and other divisions of state and municipal employes in France, recently signed a manifesto protesting against the attempts of the Clemenceau ministry to suppress the movement toward organization of government employes, a movement which asserts the right to strike, as well.

The government employes of France are also taking steps to bring about affiliation of their bodies with the unions of private industry organized in the General Confederation of Labor. These events in France, together with comments by union speakers and papers, show that the syndicalists of that country recognize no vital distinction between employers, public or private (3).

Wherein, we may then inquire, does the extension of capitalist governmental functions to industry in European countries constitute a "step towards socialism?"

(3) The revolt against government employes is not confined to France. In far away New Zealand, the "paradise of workingmen" and the "land of government ownership," we note the same thing. A recent issue of the Weekly Herald, of Wellington, N. Z., has this interesting item:

"Much is being made of the strike at the State coal mine. Apparently it has been assumed that the employment of workers by the State deprives men of the right or inclination to strike. A purely fallacious assumption. The State is very often a worse master than the majority of private employers, and under the State, as under a private employer, the worker has a right to sell his labor to the best advantage. That's what the miners at the State coal mine are doing. They know the Arbitration Court, as at present constituted, to be Dead Sea fruit. They cut themselves clear of the Act, and set out to get a better return for their labor."

Since the above appeared (1910) numerous writers and investigators, notably the socialist, Charles Edward Russell of the United States, have pointed out in detail the essentially capitalist character of "government ownership" in New Zealand.

Only in the same sense as the development of the Standard Oil corporation in America from its small beginning of fifty years ago to the giant "octopus" of the present day, constitutes a "step towards socialism." The forces of economic determinism were in play in both cases.

Economic necessity compelled the bureaucratic capitalist government of Russia to build the Trans-Siberian railroad at a time when private capital hesitated about carrying out such an enterprise. Like timidity on the part of private capitalists in Australia compelled the government of that backward and isolated country to take the initiative in developing various industries. An expensive bureaucracy in Germany and Austria, necessitating large revenues, forced the governments of those countries, in lieu of taxing to death the middle class, to resort to government ownership of railways, salt mines, and other enterprises.

In the United States, on the other hand, no such development has taken place, although trustification of industry has proceeded to a greater extent than in any other country. True, the United States government has assisted the process of centralization by means of land grants to railroad corporations, by irrigation projects, by ship subsidies, etc., which have aided the American capitalists to seize and develop the natural resources of the country; but with the exception of the postal system, government ownership in any important industry has not been resorted to in the United States.

From this brief analysis we conclude that "government ownership" is but a phase of capitalist development identical in essence with that of private monopoly or trustification of industry. The training of the wage slaves is essentially the same in either instance, and the same necessity of those slaves organizing as a class against their employers would exist under complete government ownership as it does under partial government ownership and under privately owned industries.

The transition from Capitalism to Socialism cannot

be effected through "government ownership." As I shall show you presently, that transformation can be brought about only by means of a working class organization designed for that purpose and shaped in accordance with economic evolution.

Another "step towards socialism" suggested by Kennedy and Simons is that of

LABOR LEGISLATION.

Kennedy argued from the history of the English "Factory Acts" to prove his contention that "labor laws" had resulted in much benefit to the working class of that country, and that they were a vital part of the political program of the workers. He referred to Karl Marx' "Capital" as authority for this conclusion, but did not produce from that book the facts showing the movement in detail and the underlying forces that impelled the capitalist class of England to alleviate the working conditions of their slaves.

Marx shows that conditions in the factories of England in the early years of the nineteenth century resulted in a frightful degeneracy of the English workers in many industries. This threatened the industrial supremacy of England, and called forth loud protests not only from the organized workers, but also from various reformers and philanthropic employers who were not so directly affected as those against whom the "Factory Acts" were aimed. But Marx also shows that these factory laws — particularly those limiting the work day for children, were desperately opposed by the capitalists, and were generally worded in such a way by Parliament that they could be easily evaded after they were passed. I quote from Chapter X, beginning with page 307, of the Chas. H. Kerr & Co. edition of "Capital":

"According to capitalistic anthropology, the age of childhood ended at 10, or at the outset, at 11. The more nearly the time approached for the coming into full force of the 'Factory Act,' the fatal year 1836, the

more wildly raged the mob of manufacturers. They managed, in fact, to intimidate the government to such an extent that in 1835 it proposed to lower the limit of the age of childhood from 13 to 12. In the meantime the pressure from without grew more threatening. Courage failed the House of Commons. It refused to throw children of 13 under the Juggernaut Car of Capital for more than 8 hours a day, and the Act of 1833 came into full operation. It remained unaltered until June, 1844. In the ten years during which it regulated factory work, first in part, and then entirely, the official reports of the factory inspectors teem with complaints as to the impossibility of putting the Act into force."

Marx goes on to show that the manufacturers invented a "relay system" in accordance with the provisions of the new law, by which they could put children to work whenever they needed them at different times during the day, with the understanding that the children should not be worked more than eight hours altogether. He continues: "In a great many of the factories the old brutalities soon blossomed out again unpunished. In an interview with the Home Secretary (1844) the factory inspectors demonstrated the impossibility of any control under the newly invented relay system."

Meanwhile the unions began a vigorous agitation for a ten hour work day, and the "free traders," who were then working for the repeal of the "Corn Laws," promised in return for the workers' support, to pass a ten hour bill as soon as free trade should be established.

In 1844 the 12 hour day was legalized in England, and finally, after desperate struggles, the Ten Hours' Act came into force May 1, 1848. But just about that time occurred the revolution in Paris; the English workers' political and industrial movement that had sustained the agitation for a shorter work day went on the rocks of reaction; and so the employers utterly disregarded the law. After reducing wages 25 per cent, the manufacturers for two years until 1850 had a free hand and

brought back all the old conditions against which the workers of England had fought for thirty years. They finally got the Ten Hour law declared null and void by the courts. Later on, with better organization of the workers, and a higher development of machinery, the 10 hour day became more or less general in English industry.

Marx concludes from these facts that "the creation of a normal work day is, therefore, the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dissembled, between the capitalist class and the working class. As the contest takes place in the arena of modern industry, it first breaks out in the home of that industry—England. The English factory workers were the champions, not only of the English, but of the modern working class generally."

Karl Marx' "Capital" was published in 1867, and since that time the experience of the labor movement in every capitalist country has shown conclusively that so-called "labor laws" are a delusion and a snare so long as there is no economic organization of the workers powerful enough to enforce them directly in the industries.

In the Report of the Belgium Labor Party to the International Socialist Congress, held at Stuttgart, Germany, 1907, I find mention of all the more important "labor laws" of that country. I have already referred to the comparatively weak syndicalist or union movement in Belgium, as shown by that same report. The Belgium Labor Party counted 145,781 affiliated members, and cast 469,094 socialist votes in 1906. Yet the Report shows that none of these labor laws that might be of value if enforced, are effective. For example, to quote from the Report:

"The law instituting inspection of labor conditions: That inspection is absolutely illusory. The inspectors, chosen by the government, are more often guardians of the capitalists' interests than of the workers' interests. The employer is always notified in advance of the coming of the inspector, which enables him, superficially, to put his factory in order."

Again, quoting from the same Report: "The law regulating labor conditions of women, youths and children: When it is understood that this law authorizes the employment of children of 12 years in factories; when it is seen that little children toil through long work days in certain industries; when it is known that the law does not touch domestic labor, the worst of all, one can but conclude that such protection is illusory, especially since we have no law limiting the hours of labor of adults."

And so on, with all laws whose enforcement would interfere with the interests of the master class. Such laws are all "dead letters," according to that Socialist Report.

The history of the United States is conclusive on this point. In 1866 a labor organization known as the National Labor Union was founded in Baltimore, Maryland. Within two years it had gained a membership of 640,000, and had given a powerful impulse to the agitation for an eight hour day. Largely due to this economic movement, Congress in 1869 passed a law granting an eight hour work day to certain divisions of government employes. Prof. Richard T. Ely, in his work, "The Labor Movement in America," published in 1886, says that the National Labor Union only lived about three years, dying of the "disease known as politics," and that the eight hour law of Congress remained a dead letter on the statute books. Less than two months ago, the Associated Press reported an interview between Samuel Gompers and President Taft, in which, among other requests made to the Chief Executive by Gompers was that of a "more strict enforcement of the eight hour law for government employes."

Prof. Ely concludes from the facts at his command in 1886 that an eight hour day will only be obtained by a "general refusal to work more than eight hours" on the part of the American working class.

The experience of Colorado in the eight hour movement is another case in point. For more than ten years,

from 1894 to 1905, a "civil war," very little "dissembled," was carried on between the miners of the Western Federation and their exploiters, of the Mine Owners' Association. During that period Colorado, in a technical sense, separated herself from the Federal Union, by openly setting aside the fundamental law of the land in the interests of the mine owners.

In 1898 an eight hour bill passed the legislature of Colorado, providing that eight hours only should be a legal workday for all underground workers. This law was to go into effect in 1899. It was taken to the Colorado Supreme Court, which pronounced the law unconstitutional. The legislature then initiated a referendum for an amendment to the State Constitution that should authorize or rather instruct the legislature to pass an eight hour bill in accordance with the provisions of the amendment, if carried. The election of 1902 resulted in a majority of 46,000 votes in favor of the proposed amendment. The session of the Colorado legislature which followed that election, resulted in a "dead lock" between the Senate and House on two different eight hour bills, and the legislature adjourned without having complied with the "will of the people."

Meanwhile the movement on the economic field, conducted by the W. F. of M., was threatening to bring about a universal eight hour day for men in the mines, mills and smelters, without the aid of the legislature and in spite of the opposition of the executive of the Colorado state government. The "civil war" ended for the time being with the "Cripple Creek campaign" of 1903-1904, which resulted in the miners' being defeated and in seriously crippling the Western Federation in Colorado.

Finally, the legislature of 1904-5 passed an eight hour bill which became a law the same year (1905). This law, even if enforced, leaves conditions as bad if not worse for the miners than before it was passed, because it is construed to provide for eight hours' actual work underground, which does not include time required to go

to and return from work. Furthermore, in those sections where the workers have no union strong enough to protect them, as in the coal mining districts, the Colorado eight hour law is a dead letter.

The limitations of this lecture forbid me to go into further details of this question of "labor legislation," although the material on the subject from all capitalist countries is rich and suggestive. That material and the facts already brought out point to the conclusion:

First, that "labor legislation," in the last analysis, is but an echo of the economic movement of the workers, exerting pressure through their unions upon the capitalists and the capitalists' government.

Second, that such "labor legislation" is a hollow mockery where the workers are unorganized or insufficiently organized to protect themselves directly in the industries, and

Finally, that all so-called "immediate demands" of the workers, such as the eight hour work day, employers' liability, limitation of child labor, protection of machinery, etc., can be obtained and made effective only through the action of a united and powerful movement of the working class on the industrial field.

The law-making, law-interpreting, and law-enforcing departments of government are but committees to safeguard the economic interests of the ruling capitalist class. To expect such committees to make and enforce laws in the interests of labor, so long as the working class remains unorganized or divided in the shop, is to expect the impossible. In that case, the "pressure from without," as Marx puts it, is wanting; and history shows conclusively that the ruling class will not relinquish one iota of its power until forced to. In the words of the historian, Ridpath, "The iron jaws of privilege never relax until they are broken."

MINOR "REFORMS."

Passing over such "steps toward socialism" as

“public parks,” “municipal playgrounds for children,” “old age pensions,” “insurance against unemployment,” etc., some of which might be good in themselves, but are subject for the most part to the same strictures as so-called “labor laws,” I come to the final phase of the argument, which hinges on the question raised by the Saturday Evening Post, and touched upon in the replies of the “ten leading socialists.” That question is:

HOW IS THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

The Preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World declares that “it is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.” That to this end, “the army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown.” That, furthermore, “by organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.”

The first question that naturally suggests itself in connection with this proposition is, “What, in its fundamentals, constitutes capitalism or capitalist society?”

Capitalism is a state of society based upon territorial and property relationships that have become international in their scope. The territorial unit is known as the nation, which is usually subdivided into states, counties, townships and municipalities, and which maintains international relations with other nations of similar territorial formation. The nation embraces the whole body of people within its boundaries, divided into “citizens and non-citizens.” The citizens are those who, by birth or naturalization have been admitted to membership in a given territorial organization embracing the nation.

Theoretically, all citizens are assumed to be on an equality as far as “rights,” “duties,” and “privileges” of citizenship are concerned. Out of this territorial formation, inherited from the past, a complicated system

of government has grown up, ostensibly designed to administer equitably the affairs of the people within the given territory. The machinery of that government consists of the legislative (or law making), the judicial (or law interpreting), and the executive (or law enforcing) departments. Theoretically, again, the government is supposed to be of, by and for the whole people. That theory might hold good on the basis of territorial relations alone.

But property relations in capitalist society inevitably enter into the situation, resulting in a modification of the "purposes of government," and in an entirely different division of the people. That division is not territorial; it is **economic**. A part of the people become distinguished from the rest by reason of the fact that that part own and control the land and the machinery of wealth production. But "labor creates all wealth." Consequently that division of the people who possess nothing but their labor power are compelled to sell that labor power to the owning class in order to get access to the means of life. Thus capitalist society becomes divided into economic classes—the capitalist and the working class.

The capitalist class buys the use of the social labor power of the working class, and in the process of wealth production extracts a surplus value from the product of labor. That is to say, the workers on an average produce not only the equivalent of their wages, but also the value of the raw materials, the value of the wear and tear of machinery, and surplus value besides, which accumulates in the hands of the capitalist class in ever greater volume as the system develops. The result of this process is that the capitalist class becomes relatively more powerful in an economic sense, while the working class becomes relatively more dependent, as the system develops. So that economic relationships become more pronounced, and territorial relationships less significant, as capitalism proceeds in its evolution. The "government," supposedly of, by and for all the people, becomes more and more

adapted to serve the interests of the ruling class, and finally becomes merely a committee to protect the economic power of the masters and help keep in subjection the working class.

The antagonism between the two divisions of the people takes the form of a class struggle, in which the capitalist class seeks to subjugate the working class, and thereby to get more and more of the product of labor, while at the same time the workers endeavor to keep more and more for themselves in the form of higher wages, a shorter work day and better conditions generally.

The class struggle is fought out primarily in the workshops—on the industrial field. There, the capitalist class, in obedience to its economic interests, seeks to control the social labor power of the working class; there, the working class disputes that control with the capitalist. Hence we have strikes, lockouts, and other manifestations of the class conflict.

It is on the industrial field that the unity of the classes first takes shape, and it is a well known historical fact that all so-called political movements of capitalism grow out of the economic movements of the classes. The possession of economic power is a pre-requisite to the possession of political power; for political power, as defined by Marx, "is but the organized power of one class to oppress another class."

The capitalist class controls the legislative, judicial and executive departments of the national government today because it controls the social labor power of the workers in industry. Let the workers organize as a class on the industrial field, and the political as well as the economic power of the capitalist is at an end. Not before, nor otherwise.

Now the Preamble of the I. W. W. says "it is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism." It does not, like Debs, paraphrase Taft with his "God knows!" and say that "no one on earth

knows how it is to be done"; nor does it, like Berger and other "leading socialists" propose to "buy out the capitalists" or "confiscate their property by taxation," or compete with them by means of "co-operatives," or depend upon illusive "labor legislation" as "steps towards socialism."

In clear and unmistakable language, the I. W. W. Preamble points out the logical and necessary process by which the workers are to pave the way to, and finally arrive at, the goal of the Industrial Commonwealth:

THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION.

"The army of production must be organized."

What is the army of production?

Does it consist of the workers in a given territory, such as the state of Illinois, the county of Cook, the municipality of Chicago?

The army of production consists of the entire working class, grouped according to the forms and conditions of capitalist industry. It embraces, for example, the miners, not as an independent entity, but as an integral part of the whole body of the working class. Mining cannot be carried on by itself. Mining requires machinery and timber. So the miners are dependent upon and related industrially to steel, metal and machinery, and lumber workers. Miners must be fed: they cannot live upon muck, or ore, or coal. They are dependent for food upon the producers of food stuffs in agriculture and manufacturing. Miners must be clothed; and are thus compelled to look to the textile workers and to those of kindred industries. Miners must be sheltered; and the lumber and building workers supply that necessity. The products of the mines have to be transported; and so the transportation workers on land and sea play their part in the process.

That process of wealth production today is a **social process**—international and world-wide in its scope.

The army of production must be organized, then,

not as independent divisions of miners, of lumber workers, of builders, and of others; but as a whole, with all parts related and inter-related one with another.

It must be organized "for the every-day struggle with the capitalists," that is, for contests of power over wages, hours of labor, and shop conditions. Active resistance and aggression develop power; and so the every-day struggle in the shops is essential to the process of uniting and drilling the working class.

The army of production must be organized to "overthrow capitalism," not by "buying out the capitalists" or "taxing" them to death, or voting or shooting them out of existence; but by replacing the capitalist system of class owned and controlled industry by the organic structure of Industrial Democracy—that is, by the socially owned and socially controlled system of industry.

That transformation cannot be achieved by politicians, whether "socialist" or any other kind, who may be placed in control of the governmental machinery of the capitalist political state. That transformation from Capitalism to the Co-operative Commonwealth can be brought about only by "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old," that is, by building up the organized form of the Industrial Commonwealth within the framework of capitalist society.

There is no other way; and those who imagine that the capitalist class will peaceably or otherwise surrender the industries to an unorganized working class, are hugging a dangerous delusion.

On the other hand, that the capitalist class will refuse to surrender them to an industrially organized working class, is inconceivable, whether or not at the same time the working class is in possession of the governmental machinery of the capitalist state.

CONCLUSION

On the above principle hinges the vital difference be-

tween the so-called "practical socialism" of the "political opportunists" and the genuinely **revolutionary tactics** of the Industrial Workers. The revolutionary industrial unionist may be "impractical" in the eyes of professors and other "intellectuals" among socialists, who are safely removed from the arena of the class struggle in the shops. He may be impractical in their eyes because he refuses to chase will-o'-the-wisps through the mazes of "political opportunism" that can only result in landing him and his class in the swamp of reaction.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary industrial unionist sees clearly that his tactics are historically sound and practically efficient in the long run, no matter how difficult may be the pioneer work.

And he has no illusions as to the difficulties in the way of building up the industrial union movement. He knows that oftentimes his activity means for him the blacklist; it means the long weary tramp for a job; it means misery, self denial, the prison, the policeman's club, the soldier's bullet—for many of his kind.

But again, let me repeat: there is no other way. And no matter how painful the process may be, it is but a continuation of what has gone before—of the age-long struggle that can end only with the triumph of the working class "organized to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown."

SYNDICALISM AND SOCIALISM

(From "Solidarity," April 27, 1912.)

Just now the Socialist Party journals of the United States are waging a most persistent campaign of confusion on the subject of "syndicalism." Giving these socialist writers the benefit of the doubt we conclude that the confusion is the subjective result of their parliamentary and vote-catching vision rather than the result of their deliberate purpose to confuse working class readers. In either event their conclusions are highly amusing.

The latest effusion along this line is by Shaw Desmond, "British correspondent of the Coming Nation," and bears the title, "Socialism vs. Syndicalism." In announcing the article, Editor Simons says it "gives for the first time a full and fair discussion of syndicalism and its relation to socialism." Mr. Desmond, in common with Ramsay McDonald and nearly all other socialist writers on the subject, bases his argument upon a weapon or war method of syndicalism rather than upon the economic organization itself. The following quotations from Desmond's article will help to make the point clear:

"The syndicalist talks strike in season and out of season—advocates sabotage, welcomes conflicts with the armed forces of the law, eschews the ballot box and goes all out for the bullet." . . . "Between syndicalism and socialism there can be no final agreement. To teach the workers that their sole line of advance is by the strike is bad teaching—the ballot box can do more than the bullet—to use the latter is to play into the hands of the enemy who are better equipped and better armed. When socialism and syndicalism have settled their account with capitalism, they will then have to settle matters between themselves unless, as seems probable, it will be recognized by the proletarians of the world that the dual weapon of strike and ballot box is infinitely more effective than the use of either alone."

Some of our readers will no doubt be cruel enough to conclude from the above that Mr. Desmond is simply playing the Coming Nation's readers for a lot of innocent suckers. We shall decline to accept that conclusion, but prefer rather to assume that Desmond is a victim of that peculiar obsession that logically goes with the "parliamentary socialist who is a firm believer in federated trades unionism" (the kind of unionism in this country at least and apparently in England too, that offers no menace to parliamentary jugglers). In other words, he is unable to distinguish syndicalist ORGANIZATION from some of its active manifestations.

In order to make Desmond's logic clear, let us put HIS shoe on the other foot—the foot of the pure and simple ballot boxer: The ballot boxer talks vote in and out of season; advocates labor laws, government ownership, and other equally futile propositions, abhors possible conflicts with the armed forces of the law, eschews the strike, sabotage and other industrial weapons, and goes all out for the ballot box. Therefore, he concludes, spontaneous ballot box action alone will emancipate the working class and bring about socialism. No need whatsoever for political organization to take charge of the situation after the votes are counted. No need at all for previous preparation through organization; just votes alone will suffice. The obverse of this childish simplicity is Desmond's idea of syndicalism.

It may be there are some syndicalists who hold to the creed of "spontaneous working class action through strikes," etc., alone, without regard to industrial organization, just as there are unquestionably a still larger proportion of pure and simple ballot boxers who have faith in the revolutionary magic of mere "votes for socialism" regardless of any organization behind them. But such is not the case with syndicalists in general. When Durand, secretary of the Coal Heavers' Union of Havre, France, was sentenced to death about a year ago, the C. G. T. of that country threatened a general strike in all industries if their fellow worker was not released. Now, the masters and their government lackeys needed not and would not have been alarmed over that threat alone. They had means of gathering information to determine whether or not the organization of labor in France was sufficiently powerful and equipped to make good that threat. The masters decided that such was the case, and Durand was saved from the

SYNDICALISM AND SOCIALISM

guillotine and later, under pressure of the same threat, was released from custody altogether. It was the ORGANIZED C. G. T., with power to stop the flow of profits by paralyzing industry, that saved Durand's neck from the knife. Far from pinning their faith to the strike alone, the French syndicalists have been steadily perfecting their organization through all the years, until today the C. G. T. is justly regarded as a menace to the industrial and political masters of France.

Desmond says the syndicalist "goes all out for the bullet." Where did he get that? What syndicalist literature has Desmond discovered where its author advocates "going all out for the bullet?" Where has he seen such "exclusively bullet" tactics made use of by syndicalists? Surely not in France or Italy, or even in miserably oppressed Spain, which some German and English and American "intellectuals" are in the habit of referring to as the "rawer" countries, possibly because these Latin workers resent oppression more quickly and violently than do the "civilized planers" of the North? In all these Latin countries, however, the syndicalists have shown that they are essentially peaceful, orderly and long suffering; and only under great provocation have any number of them resorted to retaliation in kind against their brutal masters. Here again the syndicalist's instinct for organization—One Big Union and the responsibility of each member thereto—has asserted itself over mere "mob" action. Mr. Desmond should pursue this phenomenon a little farther. He might, from the mists of his mountain view, discover a fact, namely, that syndicalists are the greatest sticklers for organization in the world; that while they may believe in and practice local autonomy and freedom of action of the individual units, in order to vitalize the capillaries as well as the arteries of the economic organism—they also believe in and practice an ever broader unity and solidarity of their one big union in order to generalize their struggles and enable the workers to meet the capitalists at one and the same time and at all points of the compass.

Mr. Desmond may also discover, if he pursues his investigations far enough, that this syndicalist process denotes the logical evolution of the new social system—from below—from the depths—building upon the firm foundation of working class initiative and constructive genius, and leaving behind the old spirit of dependence upon "authority" and the "saving grace" of outside classes. In other words, it denotes the practical fruits of working class awakening, of working class consciousness, of working class action—terms which have been bandied about the lips of socialists for more than half a century.

If socialists are now ready to abandon the fundamentals of their own philosophy and as Desmond suggests, become "the policemen of the syndicalists," so much the worse for such socialists. **SYNDICALISM CANNOT BE POLICED.** It will force recognition against a conspiracy of silence; it will thrive and wax fatter under persecution and misrepresentation. Its all-conquering program may be summed up in one sentence: Individual, local, national, and international working class initiative, unity and solidarity, in order to take and hold the world and all therein for the workers. Let the capitalists and their socialist "intellectual" allies beat it if they can.

B. H. W.

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